



# ASD Service Beacon

*A regular publication for FSIS field and headquarters employees.*

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Food Safety and Inspection Service

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**bea-con** (bē-kōn) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or inspiration.

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

### Regulatory Approaches to Heat Stress

by Glen Durst

Telephone: 202-720-3551

I am writing this article on July 20<sup>th</sup>, and the forecast for this week calls for 100 degree temperatures in Washington, DC. However, this is relatively mild compared to the 110 degree temperatures in the Dallas area and other parts of the Southwest. During times like these, one always needs to be concerned about heat stress both on and off the job. In the Occupational Safety and Health section of this month's edition, Roger Perkerewicz provides some background information on basic approaches to dealing with heat stress problems.

In December 1997, we developed the first draft of a proposed FSIS Heat Stress Management Program. This was informally distributed at the January 1998 Field Operations/National Joint Council Meeting in Portland, OR. It has also been informally distributed within various parts of FSIS headquarters management. As far as we know, FSIS is the only agency within USDA that has attempted to provide heat stress guidance to employees. Based upon the few comments we have received and the input

experience that our Field Safety and Occupational Specialists have gained, we plan to revise our proposal and submit it for formal consideration by FSIS.

The heat stress guidance will not be in the form of a single number that defines acceptable temperature conditions. Rather, it provides guidance on how to help employees cope with higher temperatures as well as identify employee awareness tools for supervisors. It is the type of guidance where an inspector-in-charge will be required to make decisions locally instead of relying on definitive standards issued by Washington.

As progress is made toward establishing a FSIS Heat Stress Management Program, we will continue to provide you with updates and guidance.

## OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

### New Employee

by Victor Randecker

Telephone: 202-205-0428

Laurie Segna joined the Environmental, Health and Safety Branch on July 20<sup>th</sup>. She is a Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH). In addition, she is a Certified Safety Professional (CSP) and a Certified

Hazardous Materials Manager (CHMM). She previously worked at Applied Environmental, Inc. Laurie will provide technical expertise in occupational safety and health and environmental management for FSIS.

### Life Safety Code

by Tom Wright

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**Q:** What is the Life Safety Code and how does it relate to employee safety?

**A:** The purpose of the Code is to provide minimum requirement for life safety from fire and similar emergencies. (Building codes concern themselves with the preservation of property in addition to life.) The level of safety is achieved by the combination of prevention, protection, egress, and other features. The Code recognizes that life safety is more than a matter of egress and accordingly, addresses other considerations that are essential to life safety. The Code attempts to avoid unreasonable hardships, unnecessary inconvenience, or interference with normal use. The Code applies to new construction and existing buildings.

Many states and local governments have adopted the Life Safety Code.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Means of Egress Standard was adopted from the 1970 edition of the Code. The Code addresses the fundamental requirements for life safety, building occupancies, special structures and high rises, and operating features. The Code is adopted and published by the National Fire Protection Association and revised every three years.

The OSHA Standard and the Life Safety Code are used as a point of reference in assessing whether buildings have adequate exits, exit signs, illumination, and alarms.

### Air Contaminant Evaluations

The Agency has contracted with the U.S. Public Health Service's Division of Federal Occupational Health (FOH) to conduct industrial hygiene and occupational health assessments at two poultry processing plants in Greenville, SC and Winesburg, OH. The purpose of the onsite inspections was to investigate the cause of respiratory symptoms reported by inspection personnel.

The FOH team consisted of an industrial hygienist and an occupational health physician. The inspections included:

- Worksite walk through;
- A review of the chemicals used at the plants;
- Monitoring of air contaminants including hazardous chemicals and endotoxins;
- Ventilation system assessment; and
- Inspection employee interviews.

Draft reports for the assessments have been submitted by FOH to FSIS. The Agency is reviewing the report recommendations to determine what additional steps should be taken to protect our employees.

### Heat Stress

by Roger Perkerewicz  
Telephone: 303-497-5411, ext. 247

FSIS inspection personnel may spend the summer months and in some plants throughout the year in a hot environment. Heat induced conditions can cause occupational illness, injury, and reduced productivity when the total body heat exceeds the capacities of the body to maintain normal body functions.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) does not currently have a heat stress standard. Occupational exposures to excessive heat may be cited by OSHA under the General Duty Clause.

Adverse health effects can be reduced by the proper application of engineering and work practice controls.

The Field Safety and Occupational Health Specialists have portable direct reading instruments that measure and calculate the wet bulb globe temperature index for comparison with the Threshold Limit Values set by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists. These surveys are important documentation to establish databases for comparison with suggested limits. During heat waves it is only necessary to listen to the weather forecasts to know that it is or will be hot outside. These surveys and forecasts should alert employees and their supervisors to review engineering controls and work practices.

- Engineering: Supervisors should discuss with plant management methods to reduce heat including ventilation, cooling fans, mechanical refrigeration, and evaporative cooling. Shielding to protect from radiant heat should be

considered. Steam leaks should be eliminated.

- Work Practices: USDA employees should be provided with plenty of drinking water. Inspection personnel should wear lightweight, loose-fitting, and light-colored clothing. When possible, employees should be provided with additional breaks or additional breaks of a shorter duration. Take breaks in cooler areas of the plant. Older workers, obese workers, personnel with heart conditions, on low sodium diets, and on some types of medication are at greater risk.
- Employee Education: Employees should be aware of the need to replace fluids. They also need to be able to recognize dehydration, exhaustion, fainting, heat cramps, and heat stroke as heat disorders. Use the buddy system to watch out for each other.

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of heat disorders and the buddy system go together. Inspection personnel should know the symptoms and observe co-workers for early signs of heat intolerance such as nausea, fatigue, and faintness.

Supervisors need to determine if a heat stress exposure exists or will exist by monitoring weather forecasts. They should request additional relief personnel, provide additional breaks, encourage employees to dress lightly, and encourage drinking of cool liquids. The Field Safety and Occupational Health Specialists should be contacted if additional guidance is needed.

### Atlanta OMSS Meeting

by G. Ray Kobaly

Telephone: 404-562-5961

In February of this year, Dr. Karen W. Henderson, the Raleigh District Manager discussed the need for a review and an update of supervisory training and responsibilities for the first line supervisors in her district. The Office Management Service Staff (OMSS) of Atlanta, including Mr. Richard Bolding, Labor Management Relations Specialist, Ms. Eileen Foresman, Employee Relations Specialist, and myself, Mr. G. Ray Kobaly, Safety and Occupational Health Specialist, worked together as a team to develop a "refresher" package for the District and presented it at a District Circuit Supervisors' meeting.

At Dr. Henderson's request the Atlanta OMSS provided the complete package to the field supervisors. The training was conducted during three Saturdays. The first class of 25 field supervisors was held May 9 in Asheboro, NC; the second one of 30 field supervisors was held May 16 in Fayetteville, NC; and the third one of 27 was held June 6 in Columbia, SC. The LMR training given by Mr. Richard Bolding covered the role of the OMSS, and the basic LMR training consisting of:

- ULP (Unfair Labor Practices);
- Contract (Basic Agreement Issues);
- LMR Policies and History;
- Employee Rights;
- Management Rights;
- Grievance Procedure; and
- Formal Discussions;
- Transition MOUs;
- RBO (Relationship-By-Objective); and
- VDIP (Voluntary Dispute Intervention Program).

The Employee Relations training given by Ms. Eileen Foresman consisted of the following:

- Conflict of Interest;
- Outside Employment;
- How to take disciplinary actions;
- How to document; and
- Sexual Harassment.

The Occupational Health and Safety training I presented included:

- The History of the Environmental, Health and Safety Branch (EHSB);
- Lockout/Tagout procedures;
- The location of all the full-time Safety and Occupational Health Professionals in FSIS;
- The new Digital Light Meters and Sound Meters provided to every Circuit Supervisor;
- Question and answers on the "NRR" (Noise Reduction Rating) on earmuffs and ear plugs;
- Relevant logs and forms that need to be available at plants;
- Provided samples of the new ChromAir Monitor Badges we now have for their use in the field for evaluation of air contaminants, such as Chlorine, Chlorine Dioxide, Ammonia, Carbon Monoxide, and Carbon Dioxide.

### 1998 Multi-District Safety Poster Contest

by Carol Leonard

Telephone: 515-727-8980

The Multi-District Safety and Health Committee (Chicago, Des Moines, Madison, and Pickerington Districts) announces this year's Safety Poster Contest will focus on ideas for promoting a safe work environment.

Safety Poster Contest Procedures:

Entries are to be in black and white, completely hand-drawn, and on 8 1/2 x 11 inch plain paper. Entrants must be permanent full-time employees of the Chicago, Des Moines, Madison and Pickerington Districts, Field Operations, FSIS. Entries are limited to one submittal per employee and must be received

at the address listed below by close of business October 31, 1998. The employee's name, district, and circuit should appear on the back of the poster.

Send your poster to:

Ms. Carol Leonard  
Field Safety and Health Specialist  
USDA, FSIS, ASD, EHSB  
11338 Aurora Avenue  
Des Moines, IO 50322

The Multi-District Safety and Health Committee will select one winning poster from each district. Each winner must be on the roles at the time selections are made and will be presented with an eight hour time-off award and certificate. A copy of their poster will be featured in a later edition of the *ASD Service Beacon*.

### Re-employment of OWCP Recipients

by John Campbell

Telephone: 202-720-0541

Over the past several years FSIS' workers' compensation cost have escalated to approximately \$15,000,000 annually. As costs escalate, the entire process has taken on a new image as one that needs change. Legislative change to better reflect the movement of the economy is the best solution. The Civil Service and Government Reform subcommittees are presently reviewing reform of the laws pertaining to workers' compensation.

Workers' compensation payments were never envisioned to be lifetime payments unless someone was so injured as to be unemployable ever again, and those people should be provided care. In many instances, time heals the problems that caused the initial separation from employment or the degree of medical restriction becomes so minimal as to justify return to work.

Until recently, FSIS has not recognized "light duty" because of

the inspectors' environment. Rather, FSIS has recognized "limited duty", which allows an inspector to return to work for a few hours a day with their doctor's clearance.

In May 1994, the Secretary of Agriculture presented a workers' compensation and return to work policy for the Department's agencies in the Secretary's Memorandum 4410-3. This policy states that these programs will be effectively managed in USDA agencies to control costs while providing rightful benefits to eligible employees or their survivors. Workers' compensation costs and time lost due to work-related injuries or illnesses can be minimized by returning claimants to work in light or limited jobs as soon as they are medically capable, including during any period of continuation of pay.

On July 14, 1998, William West signed a letter that went to all Managers and Supervisors explaining the procedures for hiring former employees from the rolls of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). This program allows managers and supervisors to hire two former employees from the OWCP rolls for one existing Full-time Equivalent (FTE) position to assist in daily office duties. These employees will be hired from within the local commuting area of the specific office. These positions would be considered as a permanent hire. If there are no former employees within the local commuting area, then former employees who are outside the commuting area may be considered. For clarification purposes, the commuting area is defined as a 50 miles radius from the specific office. Moving expenses may be considered for this program. To participate in this program, only former employees from the OWCP rolls may be used.

The Following Proposal was adopted by Tom Billy, FSIS

Administrator on July 14, 1998, and will be implemented by POB:

Where as anytime there is a job certification list of applicants presented for an office job such as clerk, automation clerk and/or other jobs that OWCP recipients may qualify for within the Agency we use the following steps:

1. FSIS would attach to the certification a list of qualified OWCP recipients within the general commuting area of that particular job.
2. The list of personnel on OWCP will be given consideration for selection.
3. If an OWCP person is not selected, then a written justification needs to accompany your selection, explaining why you chose not to select an OWCP recipient.

## SUPPLIES

### Government Locks

by *Pete Bridgeman*  
Telephone: 202-720-5743

It has come to our attention that in certain situations, particularly in high moisture, refrigerated spaces, some of the new Government Locks (FSIS-49) are not holding up well. We are currently addressing this problem with the manufacturer of the lock, and will have a more moisture-durable lock available soon (it will be keyed-alike with the locks currently in the field). This lock will be for use only in those areas where exposure to high moisture and extreme temperatures is a problem. We will have more information about this lock when it becomes available in Landover.

### Thermometers

We now have a pocket digital thermometer available at Landover, Item Number FSIS-08DIG. These

thermometers are calibrated in tenths of a degree increments, and can be used for verification tasks with fresh frozen temperatures for poultry, as stated in FSIS Directive 7270.1. They have a temperature range from -40 to +300 degrees Fahrenheit. For general purpose use, the pocket dial thermometer is still available in small and large sizes, Item Number FSIS-08-SM and FSIS-08-LG, respectively. These are still more durable in the plant environment than the digital thermometers.

### 1999 Wall Calendars Mailed

A 1999 Wall Calendar has been mailed out to every federal establishment (both headquarter and non-headquarter plants), to the attention of the USDA Inspector. This includes Egg Products, Import and Talmadge-Aiken Establishments. You will not have to order any wall calendars from Landover for 1999, unless you have need for more than one in your plant. We also will be mailing Wall Calendars to each District Office, Compliance Work Site, Circuit Supervisor, and Relief Inspector. (This distribution may not reach every Relief Inspector - the CORE address system has only recently added Relief Inspector addresses, and may not have every Relief Inspector's address, to date.) Other types of 1999 calendars have not yet been received in Landover, but should be available by early September. The new Item Numbers for these will be posted in the September issue of the *ASD Service Beacon*.

### USDA Decals for Helmets

The "USDA" decal for the front of the hard-hat helmet is now available from Landover, Item Number FSIS-04HDecal. All new hard-hat helmets come with the USDA already printed on the helmet; these decals are primarily for use on hard-hat

helmets previously obtained that did not have the "USDA" printing on the front.

### Gel Pack Alternatives

We have decided to look at replacing the existing gel packs used in the sample shipping containers with a hard plastic gel container. The 24 ounce gel pack needed for our shipping containers is not a standard size currently manufactured by the industry, but we plan to take bids on having the appropriate size made for us.

## MAIL MANAGEMENT

### First Class Mail Rate Change

by Carol Zrioka

Telephone: 202-720-5033

On January 10, 1999, the First Class stamp goes up one penny, from \$0.32 to \$0.33. For each additional ounce, the price decreases from \$0.23 cents to \$0.22.

Mail Type	Old Price	New Price
First ounce First Class	\$0.32	\$0.33 (\$0.01 increase)
Each additional ounce First-Class	\$0.23	\$0.22 (\$0.01 decrease)

After January 10, 1999, if you have an old \$0.32 stamp and an old \$0.23 stamp you can still use them on your two ounce pieces of mail. We will make sure we have sufficient stamps stocked at Landover, but please try to use up what you have on hand, and try to monitor your orders accordingly.

All official postage stamps are to be obtained from the Landover Service Center. Please do not purchase stamps from the U.S. Post Office and try to get reimbursement on

your Travel Voucher or a Standard Form 1164.

## DIRECTIVES MANAGEMENT

### Checklist 2-98 of Agency Issuances

by Mary M. Wissman

Telephone: 202-720-8287

FSIS Checklist 2-98 provides a listing of FSIS issuances and gives instructions for discontinuing issuances for FSIS use. Checklist 2-98 covers the second quarter of calendar year 1998 (April 1 through June 30, 1998). Copies have been printed and distributed to FSIS offices. An electronic version of Checklist 2-98 has been placed in the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

FSIS Checklists 1-98 and 2-98 and the following notice and directive issued since June 30 provide a complete inventory of issuance activity since publication of the 1998 edition of the FSIS Directives Numeric and Subject Index.

Notice 24-98 (7/2/98)

Open Season for Transfer to the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) July 1 Through December 31, 1998

Directive 2500.2, Revision 1 (7/14/98)

Smoking Policy

Many recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" library in Opdesk and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system.

Directives and notices are distributed automatically to applicable Agency employees and offices. Additional copies are available from the Printing and Distribution Section, Paperwork Management Branch,

Room 0157 South, telephone: 202-720-4661.

## FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

### FSIS Smoking Policy

by Jo Patterson

Telephone: 202-720-3033

We have issued a new smoking policy effective July 1998 (FSIS Directive 2500.2, Revision 1). In brief, the policy states smoking restrictions and also provides some reimbursement for cessation programs and pharmacological treatment (i.e., patch, pills, etc.). Smoking is prohibited in USDA owned or leased buildings, and is permitted in non-Federal buildings where Federal personnel are assigned and there are designated smoking areas. The policy also states that "An employee may on a one-time basis, participate in a smoking cessation program on official time, at no cost to the employee, workload permitting."

EPA concludes that widespread exposure to tobacco smoke causes serious and substantial public health risks. FSIS is committed to providing our employees a smoke free environment.

A copy of the new policy will be distributed to all employees by mid August. Smoking Cessation Program application forms will be available from Landover by mid August also.

**To comment on this newsletter or to submit an article for publication, please e-mail, write, or fax:**

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